

## Homespun Philosopher

Senator Arch W. McFarlane participated in so many debates during his long legislative career that any comprehensive résumé of his speeches is impossible in a brief report. But collected here are a few excerpts from his speeches which illustrate his philosophy of government and his attitude toward the legislative process.

McFarlane's belief in fair play and his pride in Iowa are revealed in the words he spoke to the House of Representatives in 1919 when he was first chosen speaker of that body:

I wish to thank the minority party for endorsing what the majority party has done, and I assure them in the presence of this entire body that they will be treated fairly and squarely, to the best of my ability. . . . We have great things to do, but we are here for one purpose, and that purpose is to legislate for the greatest state in the Union, for the greatest people in the Union, and when we go home, may we be able to truthfully say that our duty has been well done.

Ten years later, after a decade of legislative experience, McFarlane had gained a reputation as an organizer of diverse factions in the General Assembly and a leader who could fight hard for a cause but who recognized the opposition's right to

its views. That he viewed the Legislature as a kind of family which could maintain a unity in mutual respect despite its quarrels is illustrated in remarks he delivered when the Senate presented him, as Lieutenant Governor and presiding officer, a gift:

We live merely to do good for our neighbors and friends, and it is decreed that we should love one another. The family possessing love within itself is the happiest and most contented family. The legislative body in which love and harmony reigns is necessarily the most effective and most successful legislative body. We have all strived to make this a worthwhile session, and I believe that our ambitions have been realized.

But McFarlane's speeches also contain the persuasive, hard-hitting type of oratory that brings a response from men's minds, even if it does not always win their votes. Those who defeated McFarlane's compromise amendment to a resolution for reapportionment of the legislature in 1953 must have felt a twinge of shame when they heard these words:

It was not the thought of the able men who wrote the first Constitution of the State of Iowa, or who drafted the new Constitution of the state in 1857, to deny to any segment of the citizenship of the state equal representation in its lawmaking. . . .

I am asking for just a crumb from the table. We are not asking anyone to have control. We are just seeking to get a little more representation for the larger communities. This joint resolution is fair, it is honest, and it is just. If

you believe in a republic, if you believe in majority rule, if you believe in America, you should vote for my amendment.

McFarlane often returned to this theme of confidence in the principles on which American democracy was founded. At a testimonial dinner staged in Waterloo in 1953 by the Pioneer Lawmakers Association and a group of friends, McFarlane responded to the remarks of a panel of distinguished speakers:

I consider it my sacred duty in the few years that remain for me to do everything I can to impress upon my fellow men that our government — national, state, and local — must continue to be based upon the time-honored standards of religion and morality as exemplified by our forefathers.

When the Pioneer Lawmakers presented a portrait of McFarlane to the gallery of distinguished Iowans in the Iowa State Department of History and Archives, the Senator was again in a reflective mood:

I came into this world when the Civil War was almost contemporary history. It was only 20 years after Appomattox. It was only a matter of 40 years following the admission of Iowa to the Union. To have passed through the Biblical span of life in Iowa is to have been a witness to many remarkable things. In only one respect, during my lifetime, have things remained very much as they were when I was born. That one respect is that the men and women of today are not essentially different from their pioneer grandparents. . . .

I hear a great deal at times of the "good old days" and how they were so much better than those we now enjoy. I am highly skeptical on this point. In fact, I like living in this world today much better than I ever did before. . . .

I am convinced as I grow somewhat older that the world and the people in it are getting better. I have always been a great advocate of the theory that people who are able to do so should take care of themselves. I have also, however, in later years arrived at the conclusion that people who are fortunate enough to be able to help others who are less fortunate should put in a great deal of their time and money in doing that very thing. . . .

I would like to be remembered by the people who will gaze at my picture, long after I am forgotten by living men, as a humble citizen of Iowa who did his best to serve his fellow citizens, his state, his nation and his God.

But, if McFarlane there spoke the words suitable for his epitaph, he is not ready yet to have it engraved on stone. God and the voters of Black Hawk County willing, he will ride off again next January to the Legislative wars. And it should also be part of the record that neither he nor any of his opponents bear any scars.

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